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SUBJECT: BORDER INCIDENTS AND PKK PRESENCE IN DOHUK
PROVINCE, IRAQI KURDISTAN

Classified By: Regional Coordinator James Yellin for reasons reasons 1.
4 (b) and (d).

This is a Regional Reconstruction Team (RRT) Cable.

11. (C) SUMMARY: Incidents along the Dohuk-Turkish border in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region average two to three per month. Local officials claim there are 750 Turkish forces permanently living inside Dohuk Province just inside the border of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. They also note there are 700-800 PKK members along the Dohuk-Turkish border. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

12. (C) Dohuk Province has approximately 920,000 inhabitants. It is controlled politically by the Kurdistan Democratic Party. Border security is provided by a combination of Iraqi Border Guards (all Kurds) and Peshmerga. Iraqi Kurdish security forces (Asayish) benefit from wide-spread loyalty of villagers who are often the first to report at any hour incidents and the smallest sign of unusual activity. Dohuk Province has nearly 300 Km of borders with Turkey. The Dohuk-Turkish border is an important trade area for fuel imports. Transactions are cash-based due to a lack of international banking system. As in other provinces of Iraqi Kurdistan, private taxis are known to take thousands and even millions of dollars across the border for clients. Turkey is Iraq's largest import partner.

BORDER INCIDENTS

13. (C) On March 7, Regional Coordinator and RRT Off met with General Salaam Faqi, Director of the Provincial Joint Control Center) Provincial Joint Communications Center, at the offices of the Governor of Dohuk. General Faqi said about 750 Turkish soldiers remain permanently on nine sites in Dohuk Province just inside the border with the Iraqi Kurdistan Region of Iraq. He told RRT Offs about mortar and artillery incidents perpetrated by the Turkish forces along the Dohuk-Turkish border since 2006. Four border incidents have occurred to date in 2007, including either mortar or artillery fire, though none have resulted in casualties. Most recently, on February 28, 2007 north of Nazdur (Yezdor and other spellings), a village was bombarded (i.e. incident) by Turkish forces. In 2006, a total of 36 incidents occurred along the Dohuk-Turkish border area, in which three people were killed and eleven were injured as a result of the bombardments.

PKK - Kurdistan Workers Party

¶4. (C) General Saleem Faqi told RRT Offs there are no PKK offices in Dohuk Province. RRT Offs also met with Said Shangali, Director of Security for Dohuk Province who also claimed that there are no PKK offices operating in Dohuk Province. More broadly, Shangali asserted noted there is no terrorist activity in Dohuk Province from Alsar Al Sunna or Al Qaeda clandestine cells.

¶5. (C) Later that day, RRT Offs met with Peshmerga Division leader General Sheik Ali who stated that there are 700-800 PKK members along the Dohuk-Turkish border. They live together in groups of 40-50 members. Before 2003 the PKK smuggled weapons across the border, but the establishment of efficient checkpoints has ended this, he claimed.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) The presence of PKK on the border reflects a lack of will by the Kurdistan Regional Government to take military action against the PKK.

¶7. (C) Local officials told RRT Offs they believe that a terrorist threat is not originating in Dohuk Province but coming from Mosul, 60 kilometers and four checkpoints away. Local officials underscored that they have responded effectively with security forces to counter the threat of terrorists entering Dohuk from Mosul. The implied message was that they are putting their assets where they are needed most. Local officials emphasized the origin of the threat and their responsiveness.
KHALILZAD